DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 575 CE 035 844

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TITLE Project Access: ABE & GED Instruction and Testing for Sight and Muscular Handicapped Persons. (A 310 Project, 7-1-81 to 6-30-82).
INSTITUTION Philadelphia School District, PA. Div. of Adult Education.
SPONS AGENCY Pennsylvania State Dept. of Education, Harrisburg.
PUB DATE 2 Aug 82
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adult Basic Education; Blindness; *High School Equivalency Programs; Material Development; Media Selection; Physical Disabilities; Program Development; Program Implementation; Teaching Methods; Testing; *Visual Impairments
IDENTIFIERS 310 Project; *Muscular Disabilities

ABSTRACT

Project Access was developed to provide Adult Basic Education (ABE) and General Educational Development (GED) classes for visually and muscularly impaired adults in a totally accessible and supportive environment. Existing instructional materials were adapted to several formats, e.g., large print, cassette tape, and Braille; instruction was limited to small groups; and GED testing was administered at the class site. Thirteen students were enrolled. Nine were tested and placed in the GED component and four in the ABE component. Some conclusions reached were that no need exists to develop original materials, since existing materials can be converted to different forms; small group instruction with special provision for working with students individually is most feasible; listening skills and familiarity with tape recorders are of paramount importance to programs for the visually handicapped; and transportation should be provided to enable more individuals to reach the class location. (Appendixes include reference data, a questionnaire, and samples of the large print and Braille versions of the GED examination.) (YLB)

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ED229575

PROJECT ACCESS:

ABE & GED INSTRUCTION AND TESTING FOR SIGHT

and

MUSCULAR HANDICAPPED PERSONS

(A 310 Project, 7-1-81 - 6-30-82)

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August 2, 1982

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CE035844

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ABSTRACT

Project Access was designed to provide Adult Basic Education and General Educational Development classes to visually and muscularly impaired adults in a totally accessible and supportive environment. Existing instructional materials were adapted to several formats, e.g., large print, cassette tape and braille, instruction was limited to small groups, and GED testing was administered at the class site. Basically, the project attempted to identify and resolve problems of instruction and learning that militate against the handicap acquiring basic learning skills. It also attempted to provide a modicum of success to encourage students to continue their education when the projected terminated.

PROGRAM NARRATIVE

This project was directed toward a small population of visually and muscularly handicapped adults who, because of their handicap, failed to acquire basic learning skills or earn a high school diploma. Although many of these individuals are quite capable of maintaining active employment, the lack of formal education, a high school diploma and marketable skills create barriers against entering the job market. Existing educational programs in the Philadelphia area are open to all handicapped individuals, but most are incapable of providing this service because of the lack of training on the part of the instructional staff, large class size which makes individualized instruction unfeasible, unsuitable locations, and inflexible scheduling. Projected Access attempted to overcome these impediments by: 1) providing a professional staff that had experience with working with the blind and muscularly handicapped; 2) limiting the class to a size that would provide optimum instruction, if necessary, on a one-to-one basis; 3) establishing the class at a central, barrier-free location, reasonably accessible to public and private transportation; and 4) determining what hours were most convenient to the students.

The Library for the Blind provided the setting for the program. Their three-storied building, housing other agencies working with the blind and handicapped, had the facilities and equipment necessary to convert regular materials into other formats. Additionally, the LFB operates an FM closed channel station which offers special programing to the blind. Finally, the LFB's staff had long experience with working with the blind and handicapped, a prerequisite for offering any program to the handicapped.

The staff was recruited by the Philadelphia School District through examination, resulting in the selection of one teacher and two aides. The teacher, a blind

person, had many years experience with planning and administering educational programs for the blind. One aide was also blind.

Student recruitment was directed by the LFB through their special broadcast channel. The instructor, who had many contacts with organizations serving the blind, also participated in the recruitment effort.

With the exception of providing special instructional materials suitable to the blind and muscularly handicapped, the program was identical with the regular ABE and GED programs offerd by the PSD.

One ABE and one GED class were offered three days a week, or a total of 12 hours of instruction. Classes were conducted between 9:30 AM and 2:30 PM. Enrollees were administered the SCAT test to determine placement, i.e., into a GED or ABE class. Those placed in ABE classes were given an additional test to pin-point reading levels, the ABLE test.

Although materials were scheduled to be developed prior to the program's implementation, inter-office complications within the PSD and a fifty-day strike action by the teachers delayed this portion of the project. As a result, it was impossible to develop original materials. Instead, standard instructional materials were converted to the several formats noted above and introduced with success.[1]

The teacher provided group instruction to students in a round table setting. Both aides worked individually with students with severe learning problems or extreme basic skills deficiencies. The latter were segregated from the main group from time to time and given instruction in small rooms provided with cassette recorders.

The program was monitored and supervised frequently, with PSD staff visiting the

class site several times during the course of the project. LFB staff also involved themselves with the day to day operation of the program, though they did not have supervisory authority.

In June, as the project moved toward its climax, students who were given GED instruction were pre-tested to determine readiness. Special permission to administer th GED at the LFB was previously granted by the American Council on Education. A request for a braille version of the test was made to ACE; the taped version of the GED was received from Harrisburg's Commonwealth Secondary Diploma Program office. The PSD already possessed the large print version.

Since the testing of GED candidates would take the PSD supervisor away from his regular duties for long periods of time, and because the PSD already had a reduced staff, it was impracitcal for the PSD's Chief Examiner to adminster the tests. Permission to utilize the services of qualified proctors was requested and granted by the Department of Education, Harrisburg, resulting in the recruitment of several retired teachers and professionals for this purpose.

The project was terminated June 30 with a luncheon honoring all students and those participating in the program. This event was sponsored by the LFB and received publicity in neighborhood presses.

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[1] It must be noted that costs for converting materials to other formats can be quite formidable. For example, to enlarge an 8½" X 11" page to approximately 12" X 17½" costs 1¼¢ per page. Thus, a 100 page book or booklet would be $14. Multiply this by the number of class members and cost escalates. Tape cassettes require readers and then reproduction on special equipment designed to reproduce many cassettes simultaneously. Braille is rather slow, costly and requires an experienced person to transcribe. A 100 page book may resemble in mass and weight Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

RESULTS

Thirteen students were enrolled in Project Access. Nine were tested and placed in the GED component and 4 in the ABE component. One student was totally blind; the remaining students suffered varying degrees of blindness or had serious vision problems. Unaccountably, we failed to attract and recruit muscularly distressed persons to the program.

Although we originally planned to divide the four-hour class time evenly into an ABE and GED class, we found that many students attending in the morning, regardless of placement, chose to attend the alternate class as well.

Early on, the teacher determined that many of the students did not have highly developed listening skills, important for taking the taped version of the GED test or learning from a recorder. Much of the material, therefore, was recorded on tape and intensive drill given. Many of the partially sighted students did not use any type of visual aid. As a result, much of the classroom time was spent in giving these students the opportunity to experiment with various magnifying devices available at the LFB. Eventually, everyone found the device most suited to his needs.

Certain materials, especially in the area of science, had to be borrowed from the Overbrook School, an institution devoted to instruction of the blind.

Blind individuals who for one reason or another could not attend the classes were provided with tapes and materials for home study so that they could prepare for the GED on their own time. One such person was referred to an aphasia clinic.

A desk-size talking calculator was purchased for the program, but the teacher found

it impractical for classroom use; too much valuable time would be consumed in giving instruction on its use. Most students purchased pocket calculators and read them with the aid of magnifying devices.

In June, 7 students applied to take the GED examination. A request for the taped version was made to Mr. Kenneth Wallick, the State Administrator for GED; he was prompt in granting our request. The PSD already possesses the large print version. We earlier requested from ACE a braille version, but, unfortunately, none ever arrived. Later, we were advised by ACE that they were backlogged with requests and that they did not have sufficient quantities available to satisfy the demand.

The tests were administered by volunteers, trained by the PSD supervisor. From time to time, the supervisor observed the testing and found it to be in conformance with ACE guidelines. Except for waving time limitations (for obvious reasons), the actual test was identical in content and norming to tests given to the general public. The lone, totally blind individual could not avail herself of the braille test and took the taped version only instead of simultaneously with braille. The remaining candidates read the large print format and listened to the tapes simultaneously.

Some noteworthy aspects of the program according to the teacher are:
1) Exceptional application of study habits; 2) Perseverence in attendance despite personal responsibilities; 3) A strong desire to reach the goals of the program, i.e., improve basic skills and earn an equivalency diploma.

CONCLUSIONS

This portion of the report is based upon personal observation, discussions with the staff and cooperating agency (LFB) and data included with this narrative.

1. There is a definite need for programs designed specifically for handicapped individuals, in this instance, the blind. Although current legislation, practice and thinking is to provide identical opportunities to the blind as provided to the general population, often times this is impractical. For one, very small classes must be provided if instruction is to be effective. For another, class locations must be accessible and in areas that are safe. Finally, many support services are needed to contend with the special needs of blind persons, including the special equipment necessary to convert reading materials. Examples: optical scanners which translate written material to voice; enlargers used to convert small print to large print formats; cassette recorders; braille typewriters. And, most important, the volunteer personnel who do the work. Only an agency such as the LFB is capable of purchasing, housing and maintaining such equipment. This facility is also centrally located in downtown Philadelphia.

2. Since the blind must master the same basic skills as sighted persons, there is no discernible reason to develop original materials. Existing materials are perfectly proper provided they are converted to different formats (already described).

3. Small group instruction would appear to be the most feasible, with special provisions for working with students individually. Aides would seem to be a necessity for the success of such instruction.

4. Since persons with vision problems cannot read ordinary material, learning

by listening is the sine qua non of blind programs. Therefore, familiarity with tape recorders and practice in "listening" is of paramount importance if basic skills are to be learned. This is especially true when preparing candidates for the GED examination. Indeed, this skill may be just as important as academic skills.

5. The time taken to administer the GED examination to this group, though more than twice that recommended in ACE's Examiner's Manuel (7 hrs., 15 min.), does not appear to be a significant factor in determining success or failure on the tests, nor would it appear to impose an undue burden on the GED examiner. The sole candidate who was totally blind consumed 23 hours and 41 minutes to complete the battery. Because we never received the braille version of the test from ACE, this individual relied entirely on the taped version, using a braille typewriter to record her answers. It is our feeling that her time would have been significantly reduced had the braille version been available. We recommend, therefore, that the state offices of GED programs be stocked with this version of the test so as to facilitate requests.

6. Students in the ABE component of the program all made significant progress according to the teacher's anecdotal records. The following is a portion of the teacher's evaluation: "Throughout the entire program, although getting a late start /_ a fifty-day teachers' strike _/ made achievement much harder, there was a magnetic force between the staff and the students which generated a relationship that was warm and friendly while remaining professional. The single goal of progress and achievement was uppermost in everyone's mind. In addition to educational achievement, it was recognized that all of the students came away from the program with positive attitudes and a definite improvement in self-esteem."

7. Many more individuals might have enrolled in classes had they means of getting to the class location. Possibly volunteer organizations may be recruited to provide transportation, though durings these times of economic hardships and inflated energy costs, this might be idle speculation. Transportation would have to be provided on an on-going basis, for as much as a year, in fact.

8. Another way whereby such a program might reach the broader blind population is through the so-called blind channels which many localities have. The LFB has such a station, but since the program was already committed to a classroom format, this means was not employed. However, at the suggestion of a program advisor from Harrisburg, a meeting was arranged between the PSD and the LFB for the purpose of exploring ways to seek additional funding when the project ended and to make the radio channel a significant feature of any new program. Much planning, however, would have to be done before implementation of such an endeavor.

9. Ways and means should be found to fund future instructional programs for the blind. Volunteers have rendered yeomen service, but professionally trained teachers and workers is, in our opinion, the most effective method of providing a regular on-going service to the blind.

REFERENCE DATA

Number of students in Project Access		13
	Female 10	
	Male 3	
Average age (12 students)		45.9 years
Age of youngest student		18
Age of oldest student (totally blind)		70
Total student hours		1672 hours
Average student hours in program		128.6
Greatest number of hours in program, individual student		228 hours
Least number of hours in program, individual student (Student requested home study)		8 hours
Number taking GED examination		7
Number completing GED examination		6
Number passing GED examination		5
Total hours to complete all testing (6 candidates)		99 hours, 40 minutes
Average testing time		16.5 hours
Highest score achieved on GED test		278
Lowest score achieved on GED test		207 (failure)
Average score		245.3

Elva Young, right, holds her G.E.D. diploma with David Brown of the Division of Adult Education for the School District of Philadelphia.

Perseverence Pays

After 53 Years, She Becomes A Grad

In 1929, Elva Young quit Vare Junior High School to go to work. At that time, during the Great Depression, her decision wasn't unusual.

This week, more than 50 years later, she received her Graduation Equivalency Diploma (GED). And that, though commendable, isn't exceptional either.

BUT WHAT does make Young's story extraordinary is that she is 68 years-old and totally blind.

"She was one of our best students," said Michael Coyle, director of the Library for the Blind in Center City. The Library sponsored a GED class for blind or visually impaired students with the Philadelphia School District.

Coyle said this was the first such class and was made possible by a grant from the state Department of Education.

"I DIDN'T even know the classes were for the GED," said Young, of the 2000 block of S. 19th st. on Monday. "I was talking with Mike Coyle and he suggested I enroll in the class," she said.

The classes for Young and 12 other students began in January, Coyle said Tuesday. He said Young took and passed her GED exam last week.

"That's the unofficial score," Coyle said. The official word from the state may take some time, he added.

COYLE said the examination was administered in Braille and on tape. "It wasn't easy," he said.

Young and her classmates were honored Tuesday in a luncheon at the Library for the Blind on Walnut st.

For this 68-year-old woman, the luncheon wasn't so much a tribute to her work with organizations of blind people—she's president of three groups—as it was a salute to her perseverence.

"IT WASN'T that her grades were better," Coyle said. Coyle said Young was a great student "in terms of persistence."

SOUTH PHILADELPHIA CHRONICLE 7/1/82

GED Testing Guidelines

1. Candidates may select tests in any order.
2. Candidates using tapes must listen with ear plugs so as not to disturb others taking the test.
3. Some candidates may opt to take the large-print and the tapes sumultaneously.
4. No marks are permitted in test booklets.
5. Answers may be recorded on sheets provided for that purpose or on a paper with the questions numbered.
6. You may wish to assist candidates by recording an answer on a sheet, but no other assistance is permitted. This includes responding to questions asking for clarification of a question or questions.
7. Candidates may rewind tapes and listen to a question as often as necessary.
8. Tests must be completed at a single sitting. Candidates may take a rest-room break, or eat their lunch (if need be), but no test may be carried over to a second day.
9. The contents of these tests are not to be discussed with anyone.
10. At the completion of the day's testing, all tests and tapes must be returned to the storage space provided, and the cabinet locked. Give Ms. Blackman the key.
11. Count all tests and tapes before storing, and check pages.
12. If you have any questions or problems, call me at 351 - 7018.
13. Good luck!

David Brown

5-27-82

PROJECT ACCESS QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Did you find the facilities adequate for the program?

_____ Not adequate _____ Adequate Comment:

2. How would you assess the cooperation of the co-sponsoring agency (Library for the Blind)?

_____ Very Good _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

Comment:

3. How would you assess the cooperation of the sponsoring agency (Phila. School District)?

_____ Very Good _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor

Comment

4. What were the program's strengths?

5. What were the program's weaknesses?

6. In terms of the goals of the project, do you feel the program was a success?

_____ Yes _____ No _____ Somewhat Successful

Comment

7. General Commentary (Write on other side if necessary)

Radio Information Center
For the Blind
919 WALNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA. 19107
(215) 922-5450

R.I.C.B.

June 29, 1982

To: The Class who took the GED Course in the Spring of 1982

Dear Class of '82:

Just a short note to congratulate all of you on being a part of the GED Class of 1982 here at 919 Walnut Street. Whether you made it or not, all of you participated in a big step forward for people with vision problems. You have demonstrated courage and drive that many people do not possess and have brought an awareness that we are here and we want to move.

Congratulations are in order to Mike Coyle and those who fought to bring the ideas to fruition, to Joanne Davidoff and her staff who worked so hard in a new venture, to those of you who passed, and finally to those of you who did not make it.

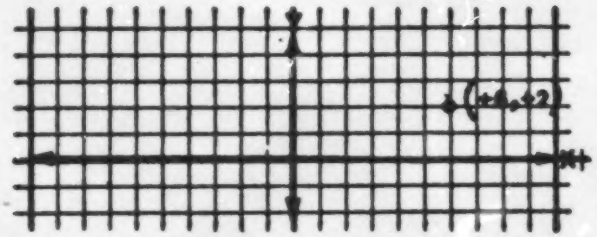
I am wondering now many of this year's public school graduating classes could pass the test that you were expected to pass. And how many of them did not make it in the prescribed time. Since I am writing this before the test results have been announced, I want to say in general that if you did not get a diploma this time, give it another try. You tried to do, in a few weeks, what others do in four or five years. The certificate is important, but the knowledge that you gained, win or lose, cannot be taken away from you. You shall always be remembered as being one of the first!!!

Sincerely,

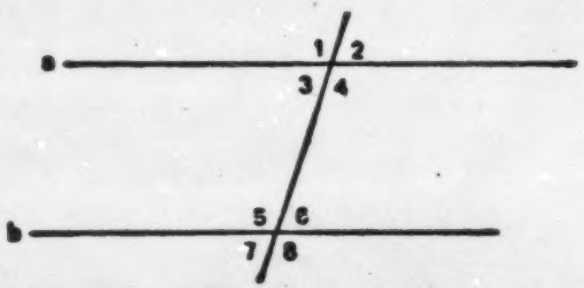
James P. Swed
Executive Director

JPS/nhm

Coordinates—two numbers that describe the position of a point in a plane that is divided by a horizontal axis called *x* and a vertical axis called *y*. The first number in a pair tells how far to the right or left of the y-axis the point is standing. The second number tells how far above or below the x-axis the point is standing. The pair of numbers (+6,+2) describes the position of the point in the diagram. The point is 6 units to the right of the y-axis and 2 units above the x-axis.



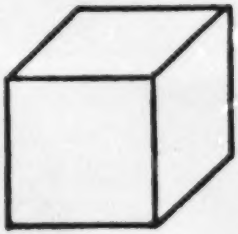
Corresponding angles—the angles that are in relatively the same position at the two points of intersection when two parallel lines are cut by a transversal. If lines *a* and *b* are parallel below, angles 1 and 5 are corresponding.



The other pairs of corresponding angles in the diagram are 2 and 6, 3 and 7, and 4 and 8.

Cube—In geometry, a cube is a three-dimensional figure whose faces are all squares. Every side of a cube has the same length.

EXAMPLE:



In algebra, the "cube" of a number is the number raised to the third power. The cube of 5 is 125 because $5^3 = 5 \times 5 \times 5 = 125$.

Cylinder—a three-dimensional figure whose top and bottom are circles and whose sides are straight.

EXAMPLE: